

A FIGURE RELATED SCULPTURE FOR AN  
ARCHITECTURAL ENVIRONMENT

by

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"We wish to model the atmosphere, draw the forces in objects, their reciprocal influences, the unique form of continuity in space. . . .  
. . . We can affirm and create plastically the vibrations, the emanations, the density, the motions, the invisible aura of the object and its action, the analogous synthesis which lives on the borderline between the real object and its plastic ideal, all that sums up the life of the object. . . ."

UMBERTO BOCCIONI  
Sculpture of the 20th Century  
A.C. Ritchie

## CHAPTER I

### THE SCULPTURE, ENVIRONMENT, AND MATERIAL

Although I am of the opinion that there is no separate species of sculpture specifically architectural, I am also aware that certain environmental aspects should be considered, whether integrated with or in opposition to the sculpture intended for placement. This need not place restrictions upon the artist, but perhaps may supply him a direction otherwise unrealized. The creative process involved can be decidedly altered from that of the free undestined expression.

While I have chosen no specific site, the intention of this thesis has been directed toward an architectural setting.

Through the use of photographs and text, I shall elaborate upon the development of the concepts of both the sculpture and its possible settings, the former occupying the most prominent position.

A secondary aspect of the problem set forth in the thesis is the material to be used. Many materials are available to the sculptor which enable him to translate from one medium, usually impermanent, to another which will withstand the abuse of nature. It is my contention that considerable aesthetic value can be lost in this translation. Therefore, the ideal medium for expression should be impervious to weather and without hinderance to the artist during the creative process.

## CHAPTER II

### THE INITIAL CREATIVE PROCESS

The mental processes that are required to create a three dimensional form cannot, at least by this author, be explained in a logical, comprehensive fashion. Something exists in the mind; it can be felt, and seen. But the process of transposing this mental image to an existing object sometimes requires much experimentation, and more hard work. In most cases, the results do not conform exactly to the original concept.

A seated figure contains much of the mass, structure and solidity found in the envisioned architectural environment. A chosen subject need not limit the artist. It only provides a vehicle, a source of reference, within which the various relationships of forms may be developed.

Exploratory drawings and three dimensional sketches were carried out before work was started in the intended scale. From the most satisfactory sketch, a

full size structure was begun. It was obvious that problems existing in the sketch would be multiplied, for unless one intends to copy the model there is a process of simplification and extension in terms of the larger object.

## CHAPTER III

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

As I intended to utilize a direct plastic medium for the final piece, it was felt that the sketches should be approached in a similar fashion. Simple wire armatures were built, upon which were applied amounts of plaster, utilizing the paste-like consistency for direct modeling, and when hardened, carving and filing. This method of constructing forms is desirable because of the variety of approaches possible. Although plaster is ideal when considering its working qualities, it certainly does not provide the desired strength and durability required of a large outdoor structure.

MAGNESITE, a combination of Powdered Oxychloride, and Magnesium Chloride, appeared to meet these physical requirements. A mixture of sawdust and silica sand was added in order to enhance the appearance of the surface.

After completing the welded steel armature and applying the first mixtures of Magnesite to the base area,

it was discovered that several hours beyond the application period, the material had a tendency to heat up and explode. If more than an inch is applied at any one time the temperature attained in the setting process becomes too high, dissipating the water content, and forming interior air pockets which continue expanding until the material can no longer withstand the pressure. In order that a consistent mixture free of cracks and other disturbances be obtained, the materials should be carefully weighed and measured before mixing. The resulting paste should be thoroughly kneaded. Subsequent applications will adhere only if the hard surface is properly treated with a liquid mixture of magnesium chloride and water. As excessive heat, wind, or moisture may affect the stability of the material, a covered or enclosed area is advisable.

Although Magnesite results in a product tougher than concrete, and carves adequately, a method of grinding or filing the surface remains a problem, due to the resistance of the material to most ordinary methods.

## CHAPTER IV

### RE-EVALUATION OF THE FORM

Because of the characteristics of Magnesite, it was often found that other projects were required in order to utilize the inevitable waiting periods, I have recently been interested in exploring expression through direct metal techniques. Within these metal statements new form relationships were found. The metal allowed a close approach to a subconscious level of expression. It also made more apparent the outstanding relationships that were present in my previous work. Time spent with the metal and the sketch pad resulted in a re-evaluation of the project piece, and many previous problems were offered solutions.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Since this sculpture was initially conceived with the intention of placement in a particular environment, it is difficult to determine the degree of its success alone. The space surrounding any sculpture can result on dramatic alterations in the appearance and scale of both the space and the sculpture. Ideally there should exist a rapport between these two elements that is seemingly inseparable. The sculpture should possess and be possessed by the space it creates.

The amount of experimentation and alteration of imagery involved in order to bring this piece to a conclusion was considerable. It is not possible for an artist to state honestly and without reservation that a particular work when completed is a satisfactory solution, because at that time, his mind has traveled considerably beyond the particular limitations of that phase of his creativity. When this process ceases to exist, so does the artist.

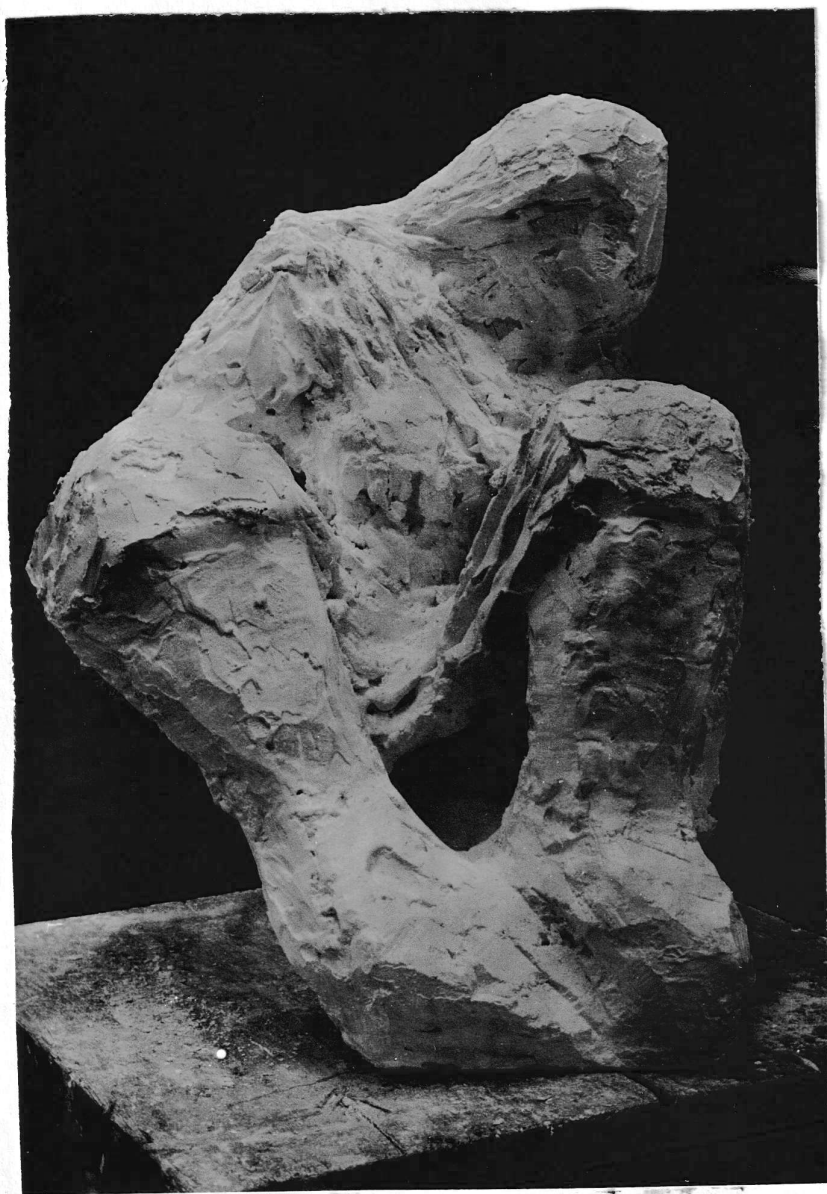
P L A T E     I

FIRST PLASTER SKETCH



P L A T E    I I

SECOND PLASTER SKETCH



P L A T E    I I I

THIRD PLASTER SKETCH



P L A T E    I V

FINAL PLASTER SKETCH



P L A T E     V

VIEW OF BASE RE-ENFORCEMENT



P L A T E    V I

VIEW OF STEEL ARMATURE AND UNSUCCESSFUL  
MAGNESITE BASE



P L A T E    V I I

VIEW OF HARDWARE CLOTH AND MAGNESITE  
APPLIED OVER ARMATURE



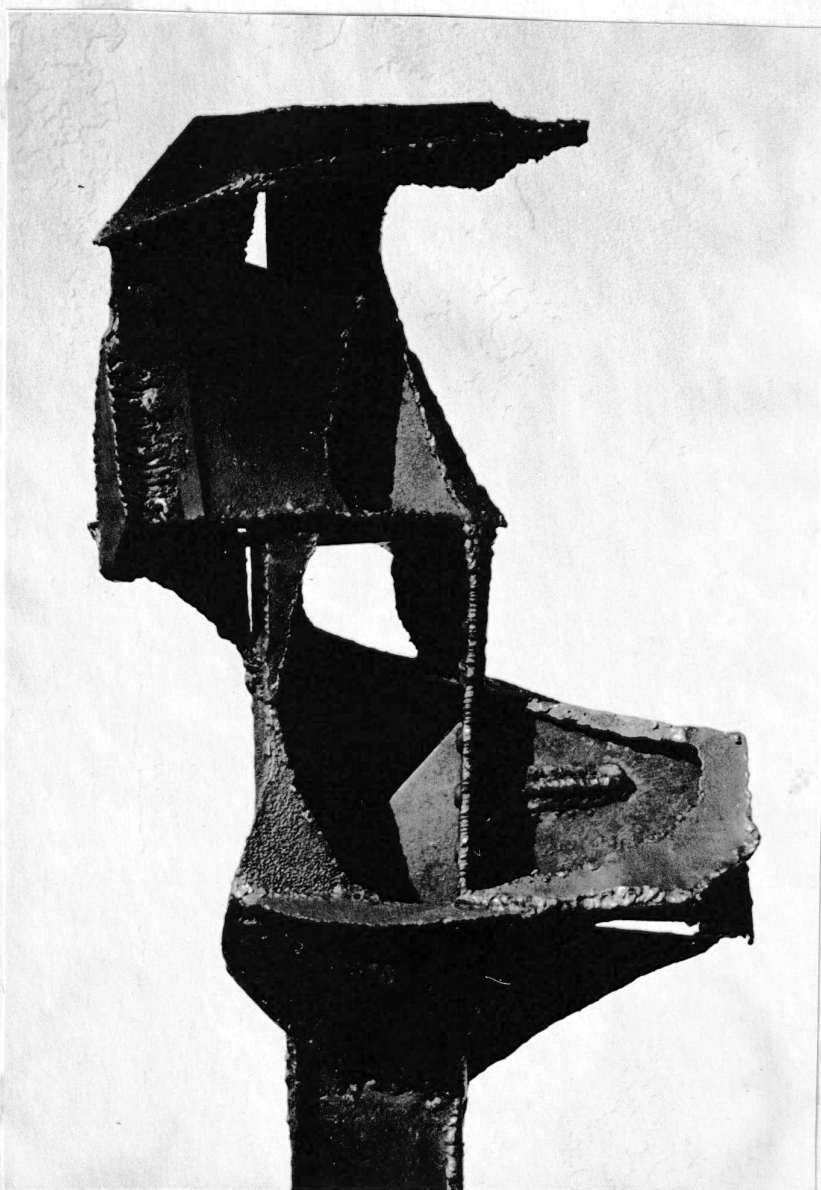
P L A T E    V I I I

DETAIL OF COMPLETED STEEL PIECE



P L A T E    I X

DETAIL OF COMPLETED STEEL PIECE



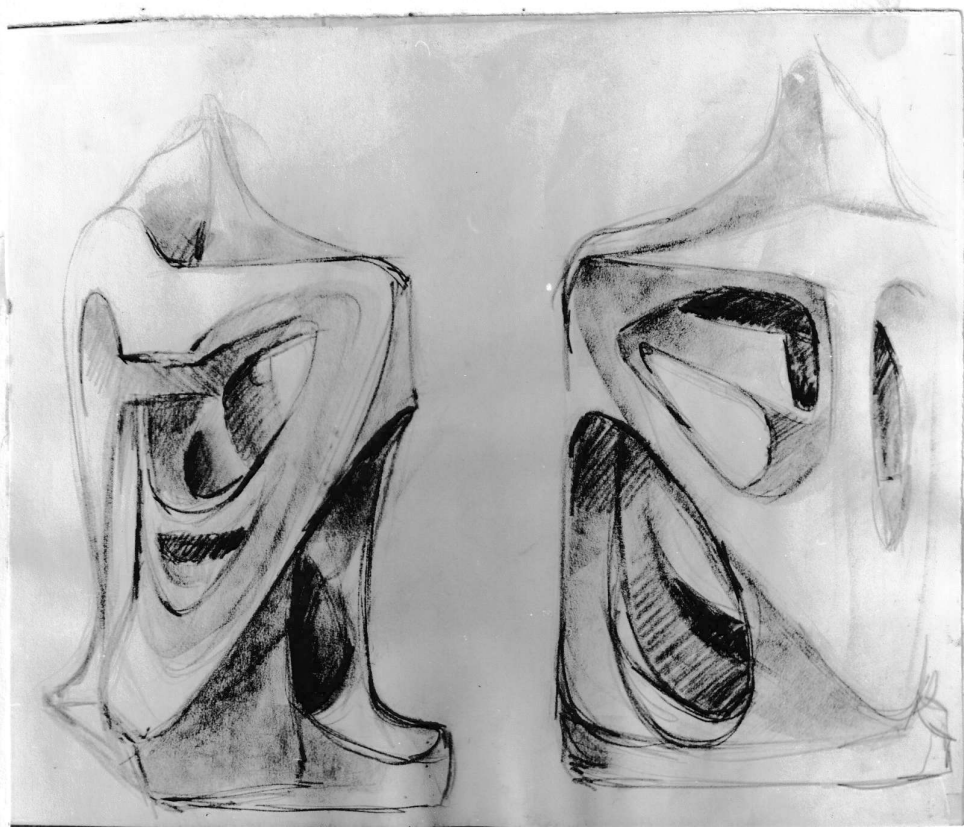
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RE-EVALUATION SKETCH



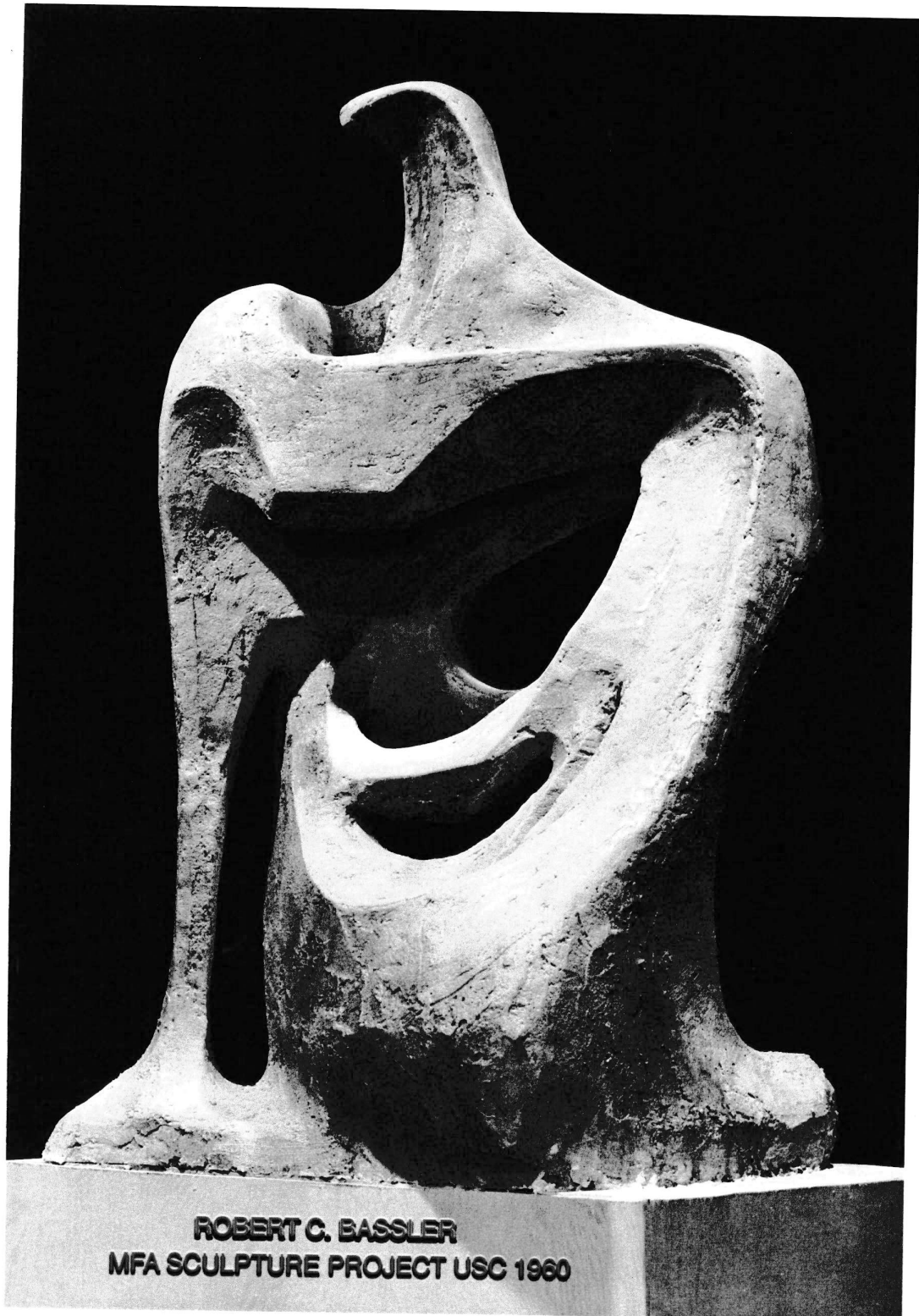
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RE-EVALUATION SKETCHES



P L A T E    X I I

COMPLETED SCULPTURE



**ROBERT C. BASSLER**  
**MFA SCULPTURE PROJECT USC 1960**